

BLOUNT COUNTY

Honorable John J. Dobson

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Council Priorities

1. Child abuse and neglect

Increased prevention of child abuse and neglect needed

2. Substance abuse prevention

More substance abuse prevention programs needed

3. Health insurance

More health insurance programs needed

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Blount County parents (0-5) are unaware of available parenting education/ information resources

Action Steps

- 1) Identify what resources / services are available to Blount County parents of children ages prenatal to five years.
- 2) Determine if there are enough resources to meet the needs of parents and caregivers.
- 3) Develop a countrywide campaign to increase awareness of resources in early care, education, and parental involvement.

Blount County children are entering kindergarten unprepared for school

Action Steps

- 1) Increase parent awareness about school readiness indicators.
- 2) Increase public awareness about the importance of parental involvement in reading readiness work with other agencies on literacy (Success by 6, Literacy Council, city and county libraries, Kiwanis clubs, RIF programs, etc).

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Increasing need for local job opportunity

Action Steps

- 1) Work with local governments and Chamber of Commerce in recruiting new industry.

Identify needs of Hispanic/Latino community

Action Steps

- 1) Include Hispanic / Latino member on policy council.
- 2) Work with Chamber of Commerce identifying the number of Hispanics / Latinos in the community.

Address loss of job source (plants)

Action Steps

- 1) Encourage development of job training classes.
- 2) Continue supporting the location of satellite college classes.
- 3) Support the creation of a job fair.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Children in Blount County will be promoted from the first to second grade

Action Steps

- 1) Support initiatives to increase participation in preschool activities to improve school readiness.
- 2) Support school and community initiatives to increase student and family literacy.
- 3) Support interagency cooperation in meeting literacy needs of children.

Children in Blount County will remain in school

Action Steps

- 1) Support school and community initiative to decrease the dropout rate.
- 2) Support school and community initiatives to increase student and family literacy.
- 3) Support interagency cooperation in meeting literacy needs of children.

Children in Blount County will have in-school access to social workers

Action Steps

- 1) Support social service access in schools.
- 2) Support interagency cooperation in meeting needs of children.
- 3) Promote public awareness of community resources.
- 4) Encourage the development of service providers' list for distribution to parents.
- 5) Advocate and assist in securing funding for additional social workers in school setting.

Children in Blount County will have in-school access to nurses

Action Steps

- 1) Promote awareness of children's health insurance options.
- 2) Support health activities in school health fairs, pregnancy prevention and health screening.
- 3) Advocate and assist in securing adequate State funding to support nurses in all schools.

Children in Blount County will have in-school access to mental health services

Action Steps

- 1) Support mental health service access to schools.
- 2) Advocate and assist in securing funding for additional mental health workers in schools.
- 3) Advocate and assist in securing funding for follow-up mental health services to support identified students in the home setting.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Increasing number of children without health insurance

Action Steps

- 1) Educate service agencies and school systems regarding availability of programs.
- 2) Distribute information regarding available programs to service agencies, school systems, and healthcare providers.
- 3) Participate in community health fairs to distribute information directly to the community.

Increasing need for teen pregnancy programs

Action Steps

- 1) Locate teen pregnancy programs that can be implemented in Blount County.
- 2) Encourage county agencies and faith based organizations to implement pregnancy prevention programs.
- 3) Seek funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Increasing need for parenting education

Action Steps

- 1) Organize task force of community service agencies to develop county wide parenting program.
- 2) Locate and apply for funding for parenting programs.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Substance abuse among adults and youth

Action Steps

- 1) Make the community aware of the issues surrounding methamphetamine use (and other drug use) in the county and the effects this drug use has on children, directly and indirectly.
- 2) Educate youth and adults on the long term impact that drugs have on individuals and on the community, as a whole.
- 3) Promote school and community programs to educate children, parents, and all citizens about the dangers of drug abuse and about services available for drug users.
- 4) Seek grant funds for drug awareness programs.

Abuse and neglect of the children of Blount County

Action Steps

- 1) Educate the community about the issue of abuse and neglect through a public awareness campaign to include:
 - A. Recognizing the signs of abuse.
 - B. Understanding what constitutes neglect.

- C. Current abuse and neglect situation in the county.
- D. Current domestic violence and family violence situation in the county.
- E. Long term impact violence has on children, families, and the community.
- F. Encourage reporting through assurances of follow through and confidentiality.
- G. Provide speakers to mandatory reporters and other concerned groups about the signs and symptoms of abuse and proper reporting procedures.

Policy Recommendations

- Garner statewide support for family resource/support centers as a point of contact with "Born Learning Initiative" (Early Care and Education).
- Mandate "parental counseling" for all divorce cases, in order to reduce the stress placed by parents on children involved in custody battles (Parent Involvement and Skills).
- Require counseling and parenting classes prior to parents filing a "Children in Need of Supervision" (CHINS) petition. (Parent Involvement and Skills).
- Designate funding for County Children's Policy Council Director (Health).
- State level database (Health).
- State to support prevention efforts (Health).
- Develop medium for statewide awareness of drug and alcohol abuse (Parent Involvement and Skills).
- Funding for County Children's Policy Council (Safety).
- Due to higher economic status & location we have difficulty accessing grant dollars (Economic Security).
- Tax base too low to support current and future needs of population (Economic Security).
- State needs to generate at-risk funds for school security and at-risk programs (Economic Security).
- To foster collaboration with United Way (Early Care and Education).